

# ECD: Maximising return on investment

Professor Peter Dawkins

ANZSOG COAG Workshop on Early Childhood Development

Friday 22 May

Every  
child,  
every  
opportunity



# The evidence for investing in early childhood is convincing and well accepted

## *The evidence tells us that:*

### **Health, Development Learning and Wellbeing**

Human brain development is most rapid around birth to three years of age and increasingly becomes hard wired over early childhood

### **Human Capital/ Productivity**

Technological change and international competition necessitates an increasing proportion of high skilled workers

### **Disadvantage and Social Inclusion**

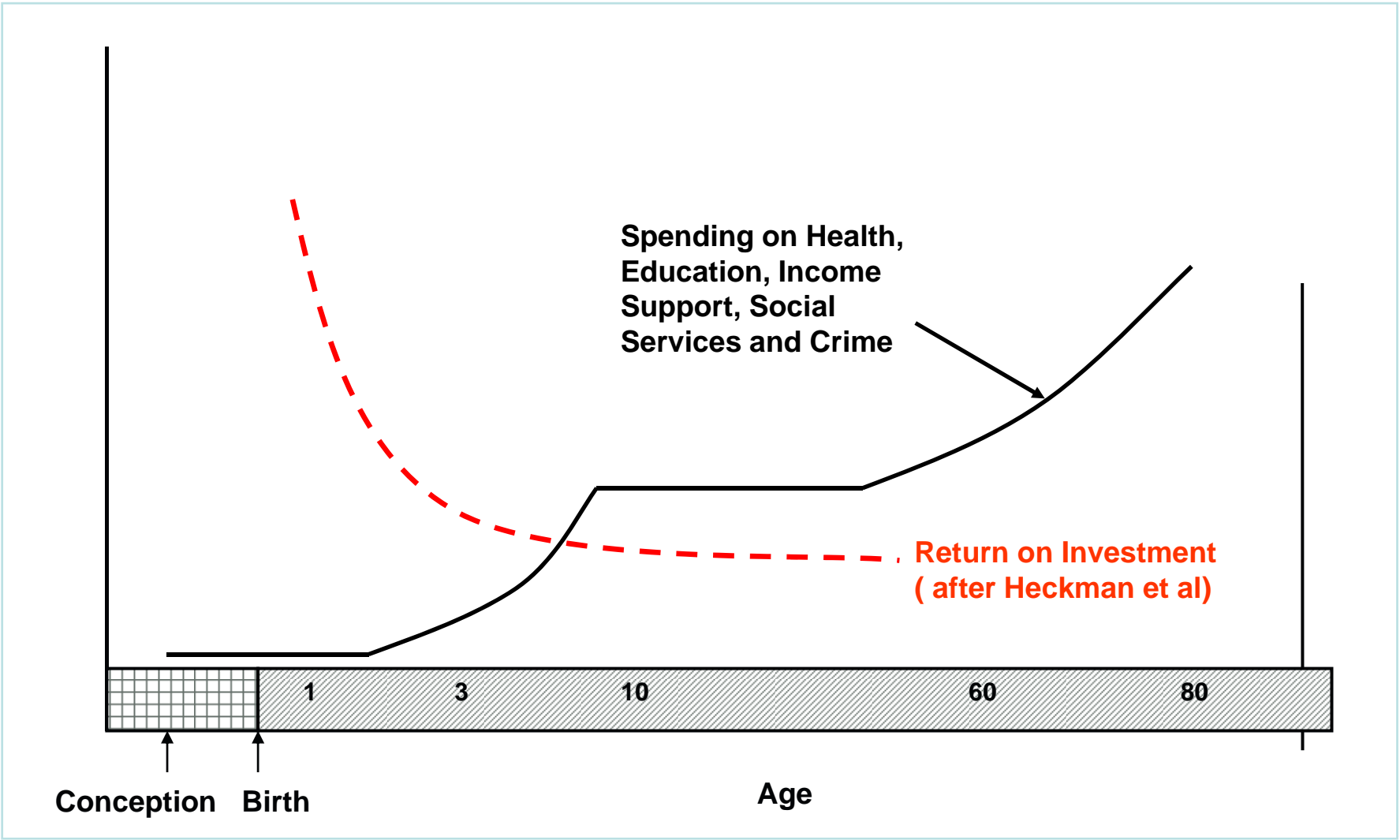
The effects of disadvantage are evident at birth and accumulate each year without intervention

### **Labour Market Participation**

It is now a reality that most parents need to work and that most children over three years of age are cared for outside the home



Every child, every opportunity



Every child, every opportunity

Resources are always scarce – no more so than now.

COAG has committed to significant reform in early childhood development underpinned by record new funding.

We need to ensure the best return on any investments that we are making in this crucial area.

1. Current COAG investment
2. Any potential new investment
3. Strengthening our current services and settings



Every  
child,  
every  
opportuni

# COAG Investment

## Universal Access to 15 hours of preschool:

- A clear commitment by all Governments to strengthening our universal services
- Represents a 50% increase of current preschool service offerings in most jurisdictions
- Requires a clear consideration of sustainable and effective reforms in the key areas of workforce, infrastructure, integrated service delivery, and local planning



Every  
child,  
every  
opportuni

# years

The health and safety of children is a strong indicator of the value a society places on children. Health and safety have a direct relationship with a child's wellbeing, and are basic human rights.

For infant health indicators, the health and safety of Australian children compares unfavourably with the best international result.

	Australia	Indigenous
<i>Infant mortality</i>	20/27 (bottom third)	26/28
<i>Low birth weight</i>	7/18	19/19 (lowest in the OECD)
<i>Immunisation</i>	13/18	15/19

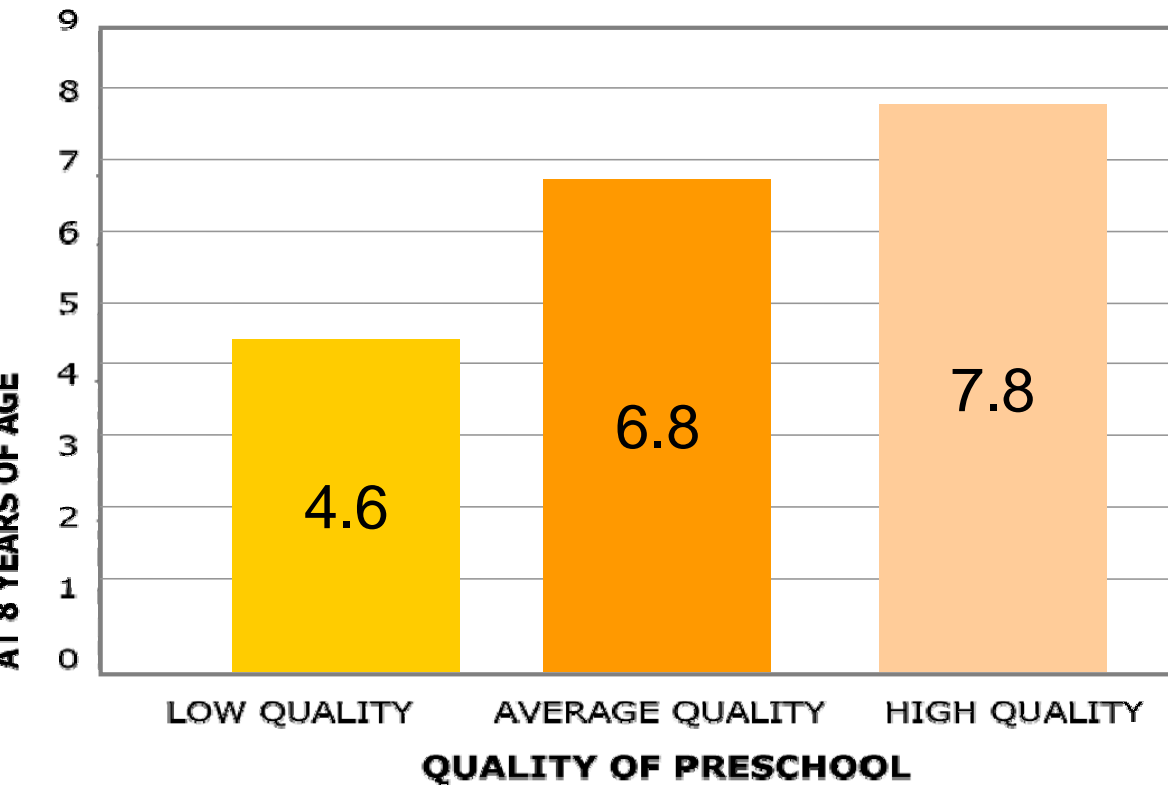
*Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth Report Card (2008)*



Every child, every opportunity

# and above

## Why improving service quality is critical



UK Effective Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPE), 3-4 Project, July 2007

## What drives service quality

- ✓ Workforce development
- ✓ Staff qualifications and leadership
- ✓ Child:staff ratios for youngest children
- ✓ Objective, transparent, comparable information



Every child, every opportunity

# To maximise Australia's return on investment we need to ensure current settings are effective:

- Are we integrating our services in the most effective way
- Do we have the right funding levers to drive quality while balancing affordability
- What do we need to do to get governance right at the community level for planning and coordination of early childhood services and programs



Every  
child,  
every  
opportuni